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Joseph Rodman Drake PARK

ADDRESS OF
JAMES L. WELLS

REPRESENTING THE NORTH SIDE BOARD OF TRADE AT THE
PUBLIC HEARING BY THE BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND
APPORTIONMENT OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

SEPTEMBER, 16th, 1904



PRINTED PURSUANT TO A RESOLUTION OF
THE NORTH SIDE BOARD OF TRADE

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THE GRAVE OF
JOSEPH RODMAN DRAKE
IN THE "OLD HUNT BURYING GROUND"
HUNT'S POINT ROAD
BOROUGH OF THE BRONX, CITY OF NEW YORK

"None knew him but to love him
Nor named him but to praise."

Fitz-Greene Halleck.

GREEN BE THE TURF.

Written at the old Hunt Grange, still standing at Hunt's Point, by Fitz-Greene Halleck in memory of his friend and companion Joseph Rodman Drake, a few days after his death, September 21st, 1820.

Green be the turf above thee,
Friend of my better days!
None knew thee but to love thee,
Nor named thee but to praise.

Tears fell when thou wert dying,
From eyes unused to weep,
And long, where thou art lying,
Shall tears the cold turf steep.

When hearts whose truth was proven,
Like thine, are laid in earth,
There should a wreath be woven
To tell the world their worth.

And I who wake each morrow,
To clasp thy hand in mine,
Who shared thy joy and sorrow,
Whose weal and woe were thine—

It should be mine to braid it
Around thy faded brow;
But I've in vain assayed it
And feel I cannot now.

While memory bids me weep thee,
Nor thoughts, nor words are free,
The grief is fixed too deeply
That mourns a man like thee.

ADDRESS OF JAMES L. WELLS.

Gentlemen of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment:

The North Side Board of Trade is represented here this morning by a large committee, and desires to be heard in relation to the resolution providing for laying out Joseph Rodman Drake Park in the Borough of The Bronx. The Taxpayers' Alliance, The Brownson Catholic Club, The Bronx League, The New York Historical Society, The Society for the Preservation of Scenic and Historical Places and Objects and The West Chester County Historical Society are also represented here by committees and are interested with us in the resolution now under consideration.

The North Side Board of Trade has requested me to address you in its behalf.

The resolution before your Board provides for laying out a park two hundred feet square, bounded by the Eastern Boulevard, Longfellow and Whittier Streets, and a proposed new street fifty feet wide and two hundred feet in length, extending from Longfellow to Whittier Street. This resolution is based upon the unanimous action of the Local Board of Morrisania, approved by President Haffen, recommending laying out such a public park.

A proposition has recently been made in, but not approved by, the public press, to remove from the Old Hunt Burying Ground to Guilford, Connecticut, the remains of that distinguished American poet, Joseph Rodman Drake, and the monument that marks his grave. The reason assigned for doing so is that no provision has been made to protect them in their present location. The action of the Local Board of Morrisania is designed to prevent this removal. It has been taken in compliance with a universal popular sentiment that The City of New York should now adopt some positive measure that will result in the preservation and care of this grave and monument.

The North Side Board of Trade sustains the action of our Local Board and President Haffen in presenting this matter to the Board of Estimate and Apportionment. An opportunity is thus afforded us to bring before you the broader proposition of laying out and acquiring a park sufficiently large to include the entire Hunt Burying Ground and thus preserve not only Drake's grave and monument, but also the graves of other distinguished men.

The final maps of The Bronx show that it is proposed in the near future to construct a public road, called Whittier Street, sixty feet wide, directly through this Hunt Burying Ground, which is only one hundred and thirty-three feet in width. Only a small irregular por-

tion of the graveyard, about two and one-half city lots, will be left on the westerly side of Whittier Street. This small, irregular plot will be just within the limits of the little two hundred feet square park provided for in the resolution now before this Board. Drake's grave and monument will be in this little plot and so near to the westerly line of Whittier Street that they are certain to be most seriously injured by the work of regulating and grading the roadway.

The preservation of Drake's grave will therefore not be accomplished by the laying out and acquisition of the diminutive park now proposed.

It is not an exaggerated expression to assert that the mutilation of any part of this historic cemetery would be vandalism of the worst kind and a lasting disgrace to The City of New York. Besides this, it certainly is the height of irony that the name of a renowned Quaker poet should be given to a public road the construction of which will destroy an old Quaker graveyard and injure a brother poet's tomb.

The larger part of the Hunt Cemetery containing the graves of men distinguished for their zealous advocacy of principles cherished by every true American citizen will be totally obliterated by the construction of Whittier Street as now laid out.

The North Side Board of Trade feels confident that it can appeal successfully to the patriotism of this Board to prevent this needless and reckless desecration.

It can be prevented now at a very moderate expense by changing the final maps of The Bronx, by discontinuing Whittier Street between the Eastern Boulevard and East Bay Avenue and by acquiring for a public park about six acres in area, the land between the Eastern Boulevard, East Bay Avenue, Longfellow and Halleck Streets. Two of these blocks, that is, the land between the Eastern Boulevard, East Bay Avenue, Whittier and Halleck Streets, containing, exclusive of the new Hunt's Point Road recently acquired by the city, about four acres in all, have already been designated on the final maps as public places. The addition suggested by the North Side Board of Trade would add only about two acres to the area already marked as public places, although not yet acquired.

If, however, in the judgment of this Board, it should be deemed inadvisable for the city to acquire quite so large an area as just mentioned, then the North Side Board of Trade suggests that the triangular block on the easterly side of the New Hunt's Point Road be omitted, thus reducing the area about one acre.

The adoption of either of these propositions would preserve intact the entire Hunt Cemetery.

Action in this matter, in the opinion of the North Side Board of Trade, ought to be taken without delay on account of the present low

price of the land, and for the further reason, that the development of the Hunt's Point section is certain to follow the operation of the New York Rapid Transit System, the extensive improvements about to begin on the Harlem River Branch of the New Haven Railroad and the construction of other railroads now seeking privileges to cross streets in that portion of the city.

Even though a public park may not be necessary at the present time, it is only a question of a few years when it will be. The present is therefore an opportune time to acquire the necessary land and at the same time prevent the destruction of one of the city's venerable and historic landmarks.

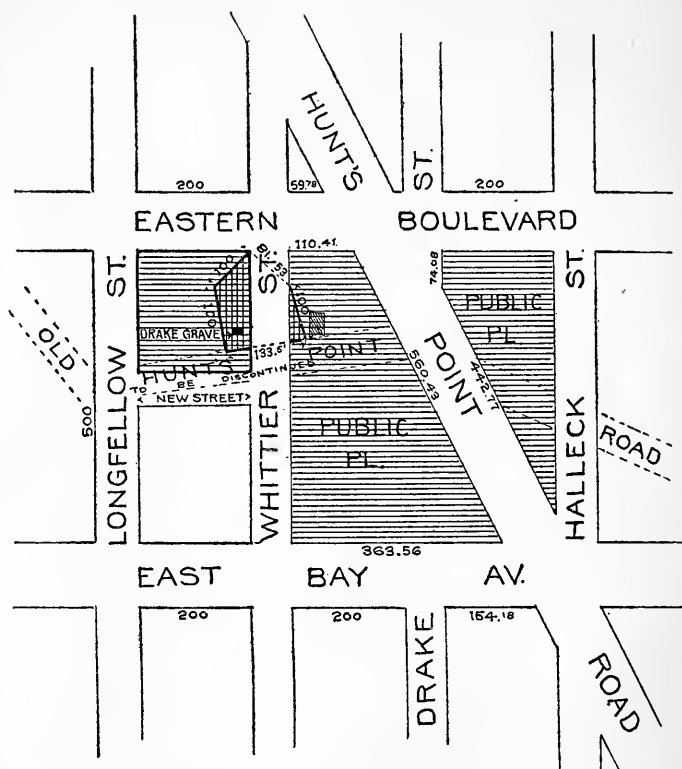
The most forcible arguments that can be advanced for the preservation of this little cemetery are unquestionably the historic associations to which reference has already been made.

For nearly two centuries and a half the little hillock on the northerly side of the Old Colonial Road to the Point has been known as the Hunt Burying Ground. This quaint old cemetery is less than half an acre in area. There are, however, but few places, if any, within the limits of our city or state about which cluster so many interesting and instructive reminiscences of the colonial and revolutionary periods of our country. It is a sacred shrine to which even the most exalted personages in our land could profitably repair and pause awhile in silent meditation, as did Lafayette when he revisited our country in 1824.

Permit me to recall to your minds the names of some of the sturdy patriots interred within this modest inclosure and the important events in the history of our state and nation with which they are indissolubly connected.

In an unmarked grave, within the lines of Whittier Street, have peacefully rested since the autumn of 1666 the remains of Magistrate Edward Jessup, commonly known among the people of his day as Good-man Jessup. This Yorkshire Puritan was one of the two original patentees of all that portion of The Bronx, about 1,300 acres, called by the Indians Quinnahong and by the English settlers the Great Planting Neck, situated between the Sacrahong, now known as Leggett's Creek, and the Bronx River, and extending from Long Island Sound to 182d Street, near Third Avenue. Edward Jessup was remarkable, not simply because he was a descendant of an ancient and illustrious English family, a magistrate and a large land owner, but because he was a brave, daring, upright man, full of restless energy and the recognized champion of the rights of the colonists. Historians inform us that shortly after he settled on his land he was threatened with banishment from the Dutch colony because he refused to take the oath of allegiance to the Director-General, Peter Stuyvesant. They

also inform us that he was one of Westchester's two delegates to the Convention of Towns held at Hempstead, Long Island, in February, 1665, for the purpose of receiving from Richard Nicholls, the English Governor, the code prepared by him and which was called "the Duke's Laws." This convention is said to be the first representative and deliberative body that assembled in the colony. On the floor of the convention Edward Jessup boldly advocated the right of the people to elect their own magistrates instead of having those officers appointed



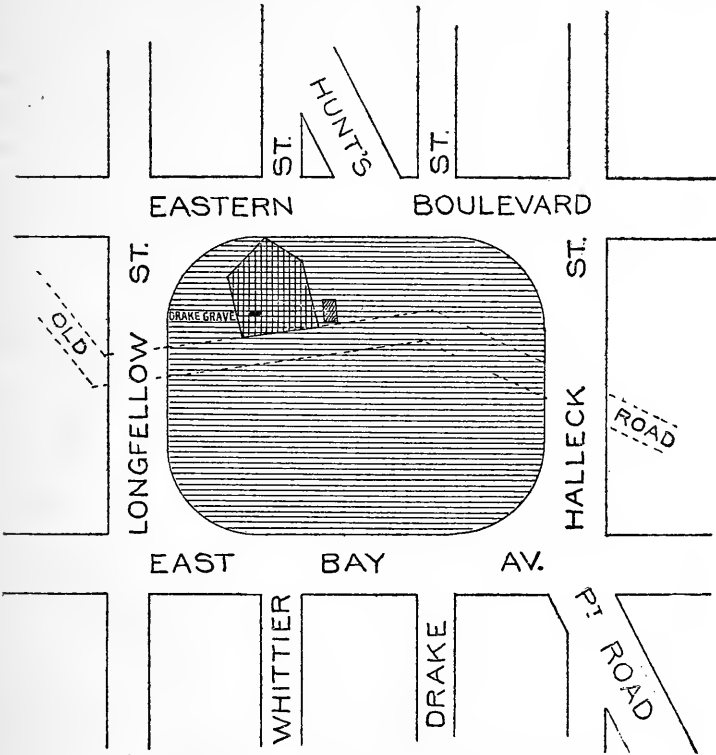
by the Governor. This right was denied. The convention, however, is referred to as the origin of the elective judiciary system of our state—a system which has been aptly described as "the growth of the soil." Edward Jessup was the progenitor of several who became dis-

* Above diagram shows the street system affecting the Old Hunt Burial Ground and grave of Joseph Rodman Drake, copied from plate 18, "Atlas of the City of New York, Borough of the Bronx, sections 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13, from actual surveys and official plans by George W. & Walter Bromley, Civil Engineers, published by G. W. Bromley & Co., Philadelphia, 1904."

Only the two triangular public places were included on the filed maps; the shaded square in which is the Drake grave, and the new short street to the left of Whittier Street, were since added in response to public sentiment; but it will be noticed that Whittier Street still cuts through the cemetery.

tinguished in the annals of our country. Among them was Major-General Thomas Sidney Jessup, a hero of our Second War for Independence and the Mexican War and who was prominently mentioned as a Democratic candidate for President of the United States.

Near the grave of Edward Jessup are the final resting places of his daughter, Elizabeth, a remarkable woman of her time, and his son-in-law, Thomas Hunt. This Thomas Hunt was the son of Thomas Hunt, of the Grove Farm, who was one of John Throgmorton's thirty-



* Plan Proposed by North Side Board of Trade.

five English families that came from Rhode Island in 1642 and settled in West Chester in order that they might enjoy religious freedom. Thomas Hunt, the son-in-law of Edward Jessup, was a delegate to the celebrated Colonial Assembly that met at Fort James in this city on October 17, 1683. This was the first General Assembly of the Colony of New York. Its first Act was the passage of the memorable Charter of Liberties and Privileges, which boldly proclaimed for the first time

* Above diagram shows Joseph Rodman Drake Park as proposed by Albert E. Davis, President of the North Side Board of Trade. Shaded pentagon indicates cemetery; small black oblong, Drake grave; dotted line, the Old Hunt's Point Road, which is to be discontinued.

in America that "supreme legislative power shall forever be and reside in the Governor, Council and PEOPLE met in General Assembly." It further provided for liberty of conscience, freedom of suffrage, trial by jury, no taxation without representation, no quartering of troops on the people, and no martial law ; in a word, the sovereignty of the people and the equality of all men under the law—the principles that years afterwards found expression in the Declaration of Independence and have since become the organic law of the land. Delegate Thomas Hunt naturally stood for these principles and voted for the Charter. Notwithstanding its approval by Governor Dongan, the Charter was vetoed by James II. because it "does abridge the King's power" and because the phrase "People met in General Assembly" was objectionable and was "not found in any other Constitution in America." On account of its passage of this Charter the Assembly was disbanded by the King.

"The character of this Charter," says an official publication of our state, "places New York in advance of any other colony and proves that it held the leadership in the struggle for equal rights and ancient liberties."

A distinguished historian says, "It was the full fruitage of freedom, bursting the shell of feudalism and clothing itself in a more perfect organic form, evolved from ancient systems which had become incapable of preserving and protecting the liberties of the people."

"This act," says another, "proves its authors worthy descendants of a liberty-loving ancestry and the true progenitors of the founders of American liberties."

Surely the grave of Delegate Thomas Hunt ought to be saved from desecration by those who glory in and enjoy the benefits of the great principles which this faithful representative of the people advocated.

In this cluster of graves which will be destroyed by the opening of Whittier Street is one that contains the remains of Thomas Hunt the third, an Alderman and Freeholder of the ancient Borough of Westchester in 1729. He was the father of the Revolutionary patriot, Thomas Hunt the fourth, and grandfather of Montgomery Hunt, a noted financier, a Presidential Elector in 1816, who voted for James Monroe for President, and who was the father of that eminent jurist, Judge Ward Hunt, of the Court of Appeals of this state and of the Supreme Court of the United States, by appointment of President Ulysses S. Grant.

North of the old Hunt's Point Road, near the line of Whittier Street, is the simple stone that marks the grave of the revered Patriot, the peaceful Quaker, Thomas Hunt the fourth, who died, like Adams, Jefferson and Monroe, on the anniversary of our National In-

dependence. The inscription on this stone appropriately portrays the character of the man: "He possessed the cardinal virtues to an eminent degree: he was temperate, brave, patient and just: the solid rock shall sink beneath the iron hand of Time, but virtue dwells with immortality."

This Thomas Hunt, so historians tell us, was the associate of the prominent men of his time in all matters pertaining to the separation of the colony from the mother country. He was active in sending delegates to the first Continental Congress. He was an influential member of the Committee of Safety. He was instrumental in organizing the West Farms and Fordham Company of Minute Men, in which seven members of his own family enlisted. During the War for Independence he was attached to the American Army. He was the friend and confidant of Washington, and upon his calm judgment, his patriotic courage and his thorough knowledge of the country our great chieftain implicitly relied. A British frigate was kept at anchor in the Sound near his house, his estate was devastated and his family driven from their home. After the Revolution he served the people as the Supervisor of the Town of West Chester.

The great City of New York should not permit his humble grave to be despoiled, his monument destroyed and his illustrious remains to be scattered to the winds.

Time will not permit me, except in the briefest possible way, to refer to other distinguished men who are interred in this historic burying ground, which is now in danger of destruction. Among them are the sturdy pioneer, John Richardson, the joint patentee with Edward Jessup, the active and courageous Gabriel Leggett, son-in-law of John Richardson and father of William Leggett, Alderman in 1730, Mayor of the Borough of West Chester in 1734 and Judge of West Chester County in 1752. There, too, rests his son, Abraham Leggett, the associate of Thomas Hunt, the patriot, on the Committee of Safety, and in raising the West Farms and Fordham Company of Minute Men, in which several of his family enlisted. He served the people after the Revolution as an efficient Supervisor of the Town of West Chester.

The little cemetery is also the final resting place of veterans of the various colonial wars and continental soldiers, members of the Hunt, Leggett and Willett families. The inscriptions on their primitive grave-stones have become illegible by the lapse of time. They should be allowed to sleep on in their honored graves "with all their country's wishes blest."

A few feet south of the grave of Thomas Hunt, the patriot, is the modest monument erected by sorrowing friends to mark the grave of that gifted young poet, Joseph Rodman Drake, the son of Col. Jonathan Drake, of the Continental Army, and a lineal descendant of a

member of the famous Plymouth Colony. The storms of over three quarters of a century have not effaced from that monument the couplet adapted from the tender verses of Drake's life-long friend and companion, Fitz-Greene Halleck:

"None knew him but to love him,
Nor named him but to praise."

We feel that it is hardly necessary for us to remind a New York Board of Estimate and Apportionment that Drake was a native of The City of New York, that he was educated in this city, that here he practiced his profession as a physician and achieved distinction as a poet, that his boyhood days were passed in that portion of the city now known as the Borough of The Bronx, that its beautiful scenery and patriotic traditions gave inspiration to his verses, and that when death ended his brilliant, yet sad and pathetic life, he was interred in the Old Hunt Burying Ground, as he wished to be, among his beloved friends and near his good old grandmother, the wife of Thomas Hunt, the patriot, who had sheltered and cared for him when bereaved of his parents.

Drake's stirring apostrophe to the American flag, the melodious music and graceful imagery of the Culprit Fay, and his charming description of the rural beauties of the Bronx have immortalized him and are so familiar to the lovers of poetry everywhere that only this brief reference is necessary in this appeal to protect his grave.

It certainly must have been an oversight in making the final maps of this part of The Bronx to designate as a public place or park the land on the southerly side of the Old Hunt's Point Road, where rest the remains of Bill, the colored pilot of the ill-fated British frigate Hussar, and of the slaves of the colonists, while no provision was made to preserve the graves of the noble patriots who did so much to make freedom for all the fundamental principle of our Republic.

The Board of Estimate and Apportionment, we feel sure, will not delay in correcting this strange oversight, but will take such action as will prevent the burial place of these historic men, as well as this brilliant poet, from being obliterated. Favorable action in this matter will reflect credit upon the members of this Board. It will meet the hearty approval of our citizens generally. Let New York act in this matter with its characteristic patriotism and generosity.



THE AMERICAN FLAG.

When Freedom from her mountain height
Unfurled her standard to the air,
She tore the azure robe of night,
And set the stars of glory there;
She mingled with its gorgeous dyes
The milky baldric of the skies,
And striped its pure, celestial white
With streakings of the morning light,
Then, from his mansion in the sun,
She called her eagle bearer down,
And gave into his mighty hand
The symbol of her chosen land.

Majestic monarch of the cloud!
Who rear'st aloft thy regal form,
To hear the tempest-trumpings loud,
And see the lightning lances driven,
When strive the warriors of the storm,
And rolls the thunder-drum of heaven—
Child of the sun! to thee 'tis given
To guard the banner of the free,
To hover in the sulphur smoke,
To ward away the battle-stroke,
And bid its blendings shine afar,
Like rainbows on the cloud of war,
The harbingers of victory!

Flag of the brave! thy folds shall fly,
The sign of hope and triumph high,
When speaks the signal-trumpet tone,
And the long line comes gleaming on;
Ere yet the lifeblood, warm and wet,
Has dimmed the glistening bayonet.
Each soldier's eye shall brightly turn
To where the sky-born glories burn,
And, as his springing steps advance,
Catch war and vengeance from the glance.
And when the cannon mouthings loud
Heave in wild wreaths the battle shroud,
And gory sabres rise and fall
Like shoots of flame on midnight's pall,
Then shall thy meteor glances glow,
And cowering foes shall shrink beneath
Each gallant arm that strikes below
That lovely messenger of death.

Flag of the seas! on ocean wave
Thy stars shall glitter o'er the brave;
When death, careering on the gale,
Sweeps darkly round the bellied sail,
And frightened waves rush wildly back
Before the broadside's reeling rack,
Each dying wanderer of the sea
Shall look at once to Heaven and thee,
And smile to see thy splendors fly
In triumph o'er his closing eye.

Flag of the free heart's hope and home!
By angel hands to valor given,
Thy stars have lit the welkin dome,
And all thy hues were born in Heaven!
Forever float that standard sheet!
Where breathes the foe but falls before us?
With Freedom's soil beneath our feet,
And Freedom's banner streaming o'er us!
—JOSEPH RODMAN DRAKE.

TOUCH NOT THAT GRAVE!

(Lines on the proposed opening of a street and thereby desecrating the grave of Joseph Rodman Drake, a gifted poet, and author of the immortal poem, "The American Flag," who died in 1820 at the age of 25, and lies buried at Hunt's Point.)

Vandals, forbear. Lift not your hand,
Nor touch yon hallow'd, sacred spot,
Though greed and lust stalk through the land
And patriotism be well-nigh forgot.

Beneath that lowly, crumbling mound,
Which ye in callous lust have spurn'd,
A patriot lies by Freedom crown'd,
Where once the fires of genius burn'd.

While yet life's hills were fair and green,
And lingering youth lost not its bloom,
He parted from the transient scene,
And donned the cerements of the tomb.

But ere departing,, from his pen
Unto his country's flag he gave
Imperishable to patriot men
A glory which survives the grave.

Upon that flag against the sky
That proudly floats o'er land and sea
He looked with raptur'd beaming eye
And wrote its song of liberty.

"When Freedom from her mountain height
Unfurl'd her standard to the air,"
Can ye that meaning read aright
And not your lifted hand forbear?

Those burning words from mouth to mouth
Which once defied the touch of time,
From East to West, from North to South,
In every age, in every clime.

Far greater than in halls of fame,
Have they no meaning now as then,
When patriotism's stirring flame
They kindled in the hearts of men?

Which kindled once can never die;
But were no voice to raise protest,
Those very mouldering stones would cry
That mark his peaceful, lasting rest.

Then enter not upon that sod,
And may that spade forever rust
Ere it turn up one hallow'd clod
Or yet disturb that sacred dust.

So rouse ye patriots thro' the land
Within whose hearts that flag holds sway
And to the cold despoiler's hand
In thundering tones cry, Stay!

—J. H. WARDER.

The following communications were submitted at the hearing by
Albert E. Davis, President of the North Side Board of Trade:

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT
THE CENTURY MAGAZINE
UNION SQUARE, N. Y.

Sept. 14, 1904.

To the Honorable Board of
Estimate and Apportionment, of
the City of New York.

Dear Sirs:—

I beg leave heartily to support the request of the North Side Board of Trade in favor of the proposed Joseph Rodman Drake Park. I do this as a citizen, interested in the good name of our city, and in the fame of our distinguished men; and also as representing the wishes of my wife, who is a granddaughter of the poet.

Very respectfully yours,

RICHARD WATSON GILDER.

Profile House, N. H., Sept. 12, 1904.

Mr. Albert E. Davis,
494 East 138th St., N. Y. City.

Dear Sir:—

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your favor of the 6th inst. referring to the proposed park at Hunt's Point. I am very sorry that I cannot be present at the hearing on the 16th, but I have written to some of the members of the Board of Estimate, with whom I am personally acquainted, and have asked some of my friends to do the same.

I am interested in this matter, not only as a life long resident of the Bronx, but as a representative of the New York Historical Society and the Westchester County Society. The members of both of these societies desire to encourage this good work, and it is my intention to have proper resolutions passed at the October meeting, not having expected a hearing to take place sooner.

Hoping that your efforts may be successful, I remain,

Very truly yours,

FREDERICK W. JACKSON.

The Waumbek, Jefferson, N. H., Sept. 8, 1904.

Dear Sir:—

I most cordially concur in your effort to save the burial place of Joseph Rodman Drake, and others, who rest in the natural mound, so well adapted for a public park. For many years I have advocated this by pen and voice, and regret that my probable absence from the city on the sixteenth inst. will prevent my being present at the proposed meeting at that date.

Very truly yours,

JAS. GRANT WILSON.

Albert E. Davis, Esq., President.



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